

Tammy M.:

This is Tammy McCausland. Thank you for joining me for SROA Soundboard, SROA's new podcast series. I'm joined here in conversation today with Amber Cox, a board-certified clinical hypnotist and founder of Maine Hypnosis Center and Integrative Health Solutions. Welcome, Amber.

Amber:

Thank you for having me. Happy to be here.

Tammy M.:

How did you become an expert in hypnosis and why are you so passionate about this alternative therapy? (0:31)

Amber:

I started studying hypnosis ... It's been over 10 years ago, and it really was by accident. All I really had ever known very little about hypnosis was I'd seen entertainment, and so I actually, a friend of mine I bumped into was studying hypnotherapy and I started asking questions and I became very fascinated as it's a natural solution for many challenges that people have. So, I started studying it and studied with one of the largest and oldest governing bodies for professional hypnotists and from there, the work just took off. It was an immediate for me because of how powerful it is, and it's natural, and so I have continued to study, take advanced studies, certifications, and I did complete my board certification about five years ago, and I'm continuing to evolve and learn. It's just an absolutely amazing field.

Tammy M.:

Can you share how hypnosis is an evidence-based practice that has garnered serious attention by leading hospitals in the United States? (1:36)

Amber:

Absolutely. What most people don't realize and one of the things that I do a lot with hypnosis is I demystify it, because it is evidence based, its science based. It is the power of our brain. It's the power of our thoughts and how that has a physiological component on our bodies. Hypnosis goes back into the 1700s and the founding fathers of hypnosis were doctors. In fact, some of those doctors influenced the work of Freud and now in modern day, I follow the work ... I have studied under doctors that use hypnosis. I've studied under psychologists, clinical people. I also follow the work of Dr. David Spiegel, Stanford Integrative Medicine, and his father was a hypnotist and Dr. David Spiegel has actually done over 7,000 case studies of the brain and shows how the activity changes to substantiate, like for instance chronic pain or anxiety, things like that, how it moves from one portion of the brain. It's kind of a disassociation. So he has over 7,000 case studies, not to mention there are plenty of people that have contributed , there's a gentleman that ... training with. His name is Dave Alman. He's passed away but his son carries his legacy and he actually contributed a lot of work to the medical community and trained clinicians on how to use hypnosis. There are several peer review articles out there about the evidence based and top universities use it, top hospitals, best in class have integrative departments that use hypnosis because it's a helpful.

Tammy M.:

Have you seen it used widely in cancer care? (3:23)

Amber:

Not as much as I would like to, and I think because there are so many misconceptions about it and people have related it a lot to the state, the entertainer, but it's a solid complement and alternative to chronic pain, pain management, of course smoking, weight, things like that. So for me, I'm seeing that it's being introduced more, and as I said, there are top ... like John Hopkins, NYU, Stanford, Mayo Clinic. These hospitals are all using it, however there's so much more opportunity, so for me, part of my mission is to create the awareness and kind of raise the bar for the profession of just how incredibly helpful it can be.

Tammy M.:

So if you think of a cancer patient, they may suffer symptoms like chronic pain, acute pain, stress, anxiety, fear, et cetera. So how can hypnosis be used to help a cancer patient? (4:14)

Amber:

This is something that is very close to me and I do a lot of work with cancer patients. If you think about even just getting a diagnosis, that's traumatic, and so what hypnosis does, and it does address all the things that you mention, chronic pain, fear, stress, the trauma of it, getting through treatment. I've worked with a lot of cancer patients who can't get through the treatment because they're so fearful and so what happens in hypnosis, it helps them to be able to alleviate the pain, manage it much better and also to really help to manage the stress and create an environment where they can learn how to get through their treatments.

Tammy M.:

So how do cancer patients find you? (5:17)

Amber:

Word of mouth. I have a website also through my website, through my work. I work in the medical community and I'm a global speaker and presenter, so I continually spread the word, the conference here. I'm in the media. I've had some interviews in the state that I live in, which is Maine, so if you google me, you can find me. So those are a few ways.

Tammy M.:

So for cancer patients, generally, how easy would it be for them to find a hypnotist? (5:45)

Amber:

Here's my recommendation. You can always unleash the power of Google, but this is what I would say. If somebody is looking for a hypnotist, make sure to ... when you find them in your area, check for their credentials. Check for their training to see that they're keeping up with their certifications, they're keeping up with their ongoing credit hours. It's really important to do their background to find out how long they've been practicing. I've been doing this over 10 years and there's a process and there's a scope that we work in, so that is incredibly important. I have a global network, so there are a lot of hypnotists out there, so it's just a matter of people being aware of what it can do to help you and then finding

someone that's appropriate trained.

Tammy M.:

Is hypnosis covered by insurance providers? And if it's not, can patients afford it? (6:33)

Amber:

Well that's the million-dollar question right there. In a lot of cases, unfortunately, it is not covered by insurance. There are codes for it, I do know that, and I always tell my clients to check and with a doctor's note, sometimes it is. In a lot of cases, it's not. So it's self-pay, and one of my missions and I also, in top of creating awareness, is for the medical profession to have something available to provide for their patients so that they can get through their treatments. It affects patient safety outcomes. The efficacy of the treatment, and it saves a lot of time. I've actually been in a space with a radiation therapist in the room with them and what they ... a lot of feedback that I've got is when there are patients that are very fearful and they're having a hard time getting through their treatments, whatever reason, they can't slow it down. They're usually rescheduled, or it creates a backlog, and so they would like to spend more time with the patients, but they're not necessarily able to do that. So, this would be a really proactive offering to help with that and not to mention to address the opioid crisis and I'd want to throw this in there because this is really important, joint commission, which is a governing body of the hospital has released a report last year ... two years ago, January 2017, EP1 through EP5, and it endorses and mandates complementary alternatives to combat the opioid crisis and chronic pain management.

Tammy M.:

Do you do hypnosis with patients while they're in treatment? (8:21)

Amber:

Yes.

Tammy M.:

So in the room? (8:33)

Amber:

Yes, I've gone in the room and then I have them come to my office as well. So for me, the going back to the question is the insurance and a lot of times it's not, which is unfortunate because on top of dealing with a cancer diagnosis, and it can be devastating financially to be able to have a resource available to them that's not adding to the financial burden. That's incredibly helpful at helping them to get through and to heal and manage their care.

Tammy M.:

Why would you encourage radiation oncology administrators to adopt hypnosis? (9:08)

Amber:

Just going back to I think I kind of just touched on that, but to be able to offer a program, an integrative service and solution that is proactive so that these patients can get through their treatments, that they're able to. I've had patients come to me. I've had work with oncologists that have called me and

referred patients to me that said, "This person needs to get through treatment, and they can't get through it. They need your help. They're not able to. They're claustrophobic." Claustrophobia's a huge one, or they're so stressed, and so for that reason alone, just to be able to get the treatment that they need and also hypnosis is very powerful at contributing to the healing factor. It helps to create an internal environment of wellbeing for that patient to be able to heal.

Tammy M.:

Could you explain a little bit about how many sessions a patient might come to see you for? And do you help them learn techniques so that they can apply it themselves? (10:08)

Amber:

I love that question. Absolutely. So, hypnosis, and I'll say this, I say, "It takes the time it takes and the caveat to that is it's usually a much shorter-term approach." Part of the reason is, is that I'm an operator, so actually all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. I'm a guide, so I teach that person how to facilitate the change that they need, and I teach them techniques so that they can help themselves through. So generally, I work with people. I say, "Get your mind around three sessions with me." Sometimes it might take up to five or six. Sometimes only one or two, but for the most part it's definitely a shorter-term approach.

Tammy M.:

It's been a pleasure to speak with you today, Amber. Thank you for your insights.

Amber:

Thank you so much. Appreciate the opportunity.

Tammy M.:

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